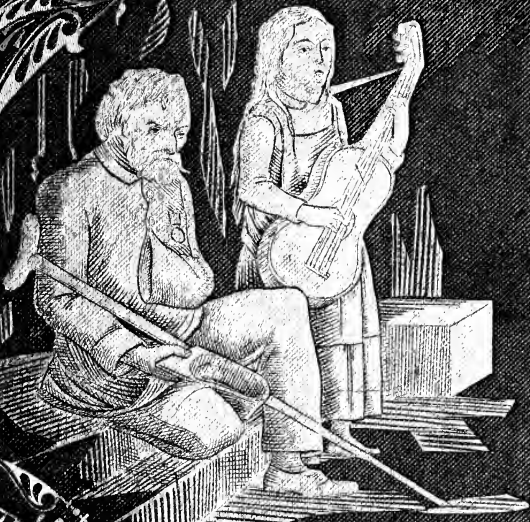


THE STREET SINGER



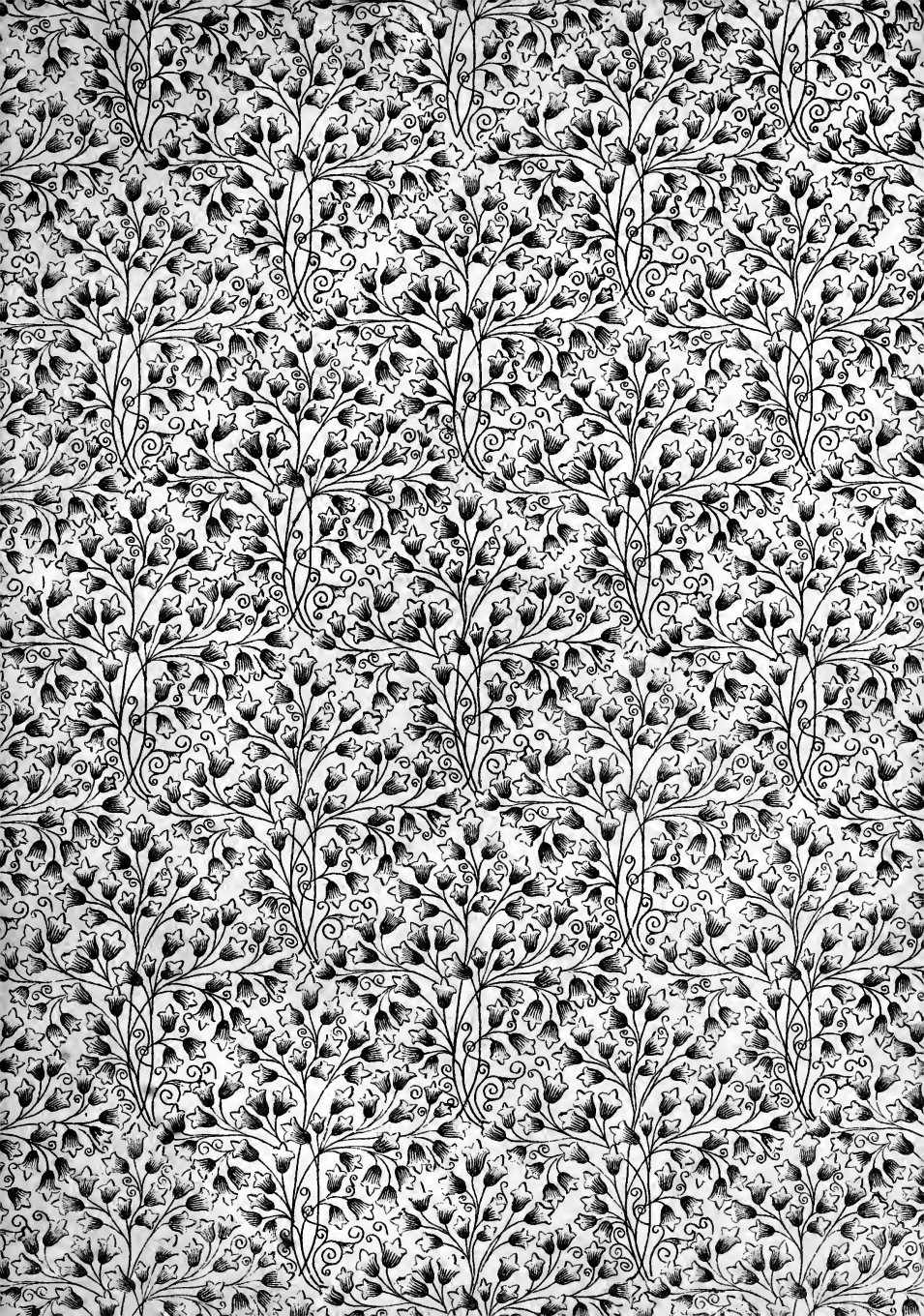


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THE STREET SINGER.







CORRECTED EDITION.

THE
STREET SINGER;

A Poem.

BY D. C. ADDISON.



CHICAGO:
HENRY A. SUMNER AND COMPANY.

1880.

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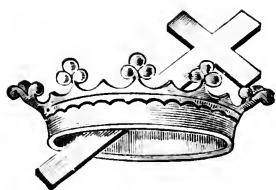
HENRY A. SUMNER & COMPANY.

u. m. v., 11.02.12, 1922.

DR. GEO. F. ROOT,

Whose songs have gladdened thousands of homes,
and made hearts happy everywhere,
this little work

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.



No cord, I well believe, is wound so tight
Round chest, nor nails the plank so fastly hold,
As Faith enwraps an honorable sprite
In its secure inextricable fold;
Nor holy Faith, it seems, except in white
Was mantled over in the days of old;
So by the ancient limner ever painted
As by one speck, one single blemish, tainted.

Faith should be kept unbroken ever more,
With one or with a thousand men united,
As well if given in grot or forest hoar
Remote from town and hamlet, as if plighted
Amid a crowd of witnesses, before
Tribunal, and in act and deed recited,
Nor needs the solemn sanction of an oath:
It is sufficient that we pledge our troth.

Ariosto.



PART FIRST.



PART FIRST.

EDNA.

OH, Earnest, 'tis a year to-night
Since baby Agnes took her flight
From earth, and we two stood alone
With sorrow in the gathering gloom.
And icy cold, and still, and white,
Our darling lay, in the cruel blight
Of death. All brightness from us fled,
All hope within our hearts was dead.
And soon a grave—a tiny mound,
With sparkling grasses quaintly crowned

With frost's frail gossamer of snow,
'Round which the chill winds wake and blow,
And sigh and moan. And all was o'er—
Our Agnes was our own no more.
And now, before my grief-blind eyes,
The self-same scenes of sorrow rise :—
To-night I see it all again—
The great, dumb agony of pain—
The moaning winter's wind I hear,
My soul aghast with speechless fear :
Again to tears, and prayers, and sighs,
But mocking echo brings replies ;
And now, before my aching sight,
Low lies our Agnes, in the blight
Of death. Oh, Earnest, *what is death?*
When dark the skies, how sweet is faith !
But where is she—our little one
We left in yonder church-yard lone ?
She *lives*, we know, for it is said

By faith we'll meet—

EARNEST.

—We know she's dead !
And where we laid her she will sleep
For ever, 'neath the little heap
Of earth and grassy sod—her grave ;
No superstitions shall enslave
My mind with hopes and fancies vain—
The products of a fevered brain ;
Facts against fancies, so I say :
We know where Agnes is, and aye
Will be, until by slow decay
She moulder back again to clay.

EDNA.

What say you, Earnest ? back to clay ?
If man sprung from it once, then may

Not our Creator call again
That clay to life? then is it vain
To hope our little one shall rise,
Sometime, immortal, in the skies?

EARNEST.

I used a hackneyed phrase, may be—
The shackles of old chains, you see,
The links all broken, still will cling
Around one, and with clankings ring
Into the mind, against the will,
Their fragmentary phrases still.
I simply meant just what I said—
Our little Agnes now is dead.

EDNA.

But, Earnest, I've seen the worm revive
And joyfully again to life

Its being all anew unfold,
It sailed on burnished wings of gold—
To such a worm as great a heaven
As that we hope to man is given.
I've watched, when autumn's chill wind blows,
And seen the petals of the rose
Fall from their stem upon the ground,
Its dying sweetness wafted round ;
But in the spring, all fresh and fair,
Its living breath was in the air.
I've watched a single tiny grain
Bring forth the verdant plant again ;—
Now the worm, the rose, the grain of corn,
Are types of the resurrection morn.

EARNEST.

Weak reasoning ! Edna ; all in vain—
Phantoms, at best, of the poet's brain ;
Reasons that women please, may be,

But false, and stale, and weak they be.
We've watched the spring-time come and go,
That worms to insects warm we know ;—
We know how summer sun and rain
Revive the buried seed again—
We know,—we've seen with our own eyes,—
But man, once dead, again shall rise !
Absurd, I say ! what proof have we
That such our altered state shall be—
That graves shall open, dead men walk—
About the resurrection talk ?
It is not positive, you see,
This reasoning from analogy.
Such dreams may feeble minds beguile,
But wisdom scouts, and science smiles
At the strange antics reason makes,
When, playing blind-man's buff, she takes
Such mighty strides, and grasps at air.
And this is faith ! and now compare

What it may clutch thus aimlessly,
With that attained by reason's eye.

I've longed that you the truth might find,
But, Edna, you've a childish mind—
Hold to your old faith, Santa Claus ;
In the old track move on, nor pause
To scan the so-called Sacred Truth
The Church has taught you in your youth.
Those truths, Edna, if closely scanned,
Prove cunning fables, nicely planned ;
Fit to be written on the page
Of a blind, superstitious age,
When witches, ghosts and goblins dwelt,
And men in adoration knelt
Before a man, or God, that died—
One Christ, that once was crucified.
All that, we know, has passed away,
For what was true, is false to-day ;

“Progress” is stamped on everything !
Nothing is fixed, but on the wing :
A mountain that to-day we see,
To-morrow may a valley be ;
The lesson that to us seems wise
The next may view with laughing eyes.
So, Edna, this I wish to say :—
The old religion’s passed away ;
For lo, we must have something new,
As new in arts, religion too.

EDNA.

O, Earnest, your talk seems strange to me—
Religion new ! how can that be ?
As well new sun and stars require,
If of the old ones we might tire !
Religion comes from God, if true ;
He knows if best to form it new,
And oh, how sad and desolate—

How truly dreadful man's estate
Without religion—dreadful thought !
To what a goal has reason brought
Frail mortals, and how cold
And small the creed it does unfold.
Like a poor wretch tossed by the storm—
No light to cheer, no fire to warm—
I'd feel without religion's power
To cheer me in affliction's hour.

I can not argue well, like you,
And draw the line 'twixt false and true ;
As St. Paul said, our faith is vain
If Jesus be not risen again,
But we have proof that he *did* rise—
That he ascended to the skies.
Full half we know we take on trust
In others' knowledge, and we must,
Or narrow down our little creed

To a poor, paltry speck indeed.
Belief may be as good, as true,
As if from sight the facts we knew ;
And with religion it is so—
We take on trust what others know.
St. Paul was infidel as you,
And he was forced to think it true—
To think ? aye, rather forced to *know*,
And every former doubt forego.

Earnest, when you your views explained,
You used a hackneyed phrase again ;
You said “ Religion, fairly scanned,
Proved cunning fables, nicely planned.”
St. Paul says such he followed not—
He was a man of mighty thought,
And mighty power and earnest zeal ;
That he was truthful we must feel,
For candid reason says and why

To prove a falsehood would he die ?
It seems to me there's some mistake
When lynx-eyed Reason, wide awake,
Cuts queerer antics, as we see,
Than Faith, though blindfold Faith may be !
Reason without religion grows insane—

Rends all before her, needs a chain :
Without religion's fostering care,
Where our prophets, our poets where !
What devastation would be wrought—
All swept away and brought to naught !

EARNEST.

Edna, not so ! not so, I say,
Are works of fiction swept away ?
Are fables nothing, if not *true* ?
If we were happier were they true
I'd gladly cheat myself and you !

EDNA.

I know I can not argue well,
Nor half I think and feel can tell,
And do the cause my heart most near
More harm than good, sometimes I fear ;
But safe to judge—may it not be—
If fruit is good, then so the tree ?

EARNEST.

Well said ! Crusades in days of yore—
Such like were fruits religion bore !

EDNA.

Not pure religion, Earnest, no !
By man it was corrupted : though
As well the worm that gnaws the tree
The fruit it bears might call'd be.

EARNEST.

A truce, I pray ! you rightly said
For argument you ne'er were made ;
So if it please you we will stop
And let this worn-out subject drop !
I'd be more infidel to-day,
I'm sure, for anything you'd say.
'Tis easy, when all life is sweet
And flowers spring up around our feet,
To wisely talk of Providence,
And faith, that brings a recompense
To sorrowing souls who, hedged about
With ill, yet do not doubt.
But oh, when Azrael draws near
And smites the ones our hearts most dear—
'Tis then we clasp our dead and weep—
They wake not from their dreamless sleep,
And tears of anguish fall like rain,
And prayers and sobs are all in vain.

So 'twas when little Agnes died,
And faded out our hearts' best pride ;
And when we left her, still and cold,
Beneath the grave-yard's grass and mould,
The pain we carried with us thence
Can never know a recompense.

PART SECOND.



PART SECOND.

No matter why or whence she came,
Let it suffice to give her name :—
This is a Rondo, at the close
The last bar joins the first and flows
At length, in harmony of sound,
In one complete and perfect round.
Be patient ; when the measures meet
The meaning shall be made complete.

So we will say she came, one day,
The friendless, lone one, Mabel Clay :
And Edna looked on her amazed.
How beautiful ! she thought, and gazed
In admiration undisguised,

Till Mabel shrank, in turn surprised,
The while her blue eyes' light was hid
Beneath each velvet drooping lid.
And fair she was, of form and face—
Tall and slender, of matchless grace ;
No brighter gems than her sparkling eyes,
Her cheeks as warm as sunset skies,
And o'er her shoulders, sweeping down,
A wealth of hair, half gold, half brown ;
A smile played o'er her blushing cheek,
And 'round her mouth, half sweet, half weak.

Poor trembling little humming-bird !—
Thought Edna—ne'er by deed or word
Shall you be harmed ; from winds that blow
I'll shelter thee. No darts of woe
Shall reach thee, flow'rs shall round thee
bloom,
Untouched by frost and wintry gloom ;

Here is thy cage, at last bright rays
Shall shine, and crown with joy thy days !
Then Edna strove her guest to please—
To warm her heart, place her at ease,
And makes her feel, now she had come—
(To use a common phrase)—at home.

She took the poor, lone little waif
Right to her heart, and deemed her safe.
And Mabel seemed a witching wile,
Or laughing sunbeam, by whose smile
From winter sudden summer came,
And flowers sprung up of every name ;
All round her light deft fingers played,
Her feet in lawn and garden strayed ,
And never in the tide of spring
Did mating birds more sweetly sing.
She was a lark by morning light,
A warbling nightingale at night ;

And Edna was content to bask
In this new warmth, nor cared to ask
Where had her fair young charge been taught ?
What to her hearth-stone had she brought
Of real worth, or lasting good ?
Whence had she come ? what mental food
Had nurtured her in early youth ?
What did she know of moral truth ?

Had Edna scanned fair Mabel's mind,
Its hidden principles to find,
Beneath the fertile mental ground
No deepened root she might have found :—
Only the germs of flowers there
That waited for the gardener's care.
The germs of roses ? It may be ;
But time will solve the mystery.
When the soft petals shall unfold
With tint of crimson or of gold.

But, like the rose, so has, 'tis true,
The deadly night-shade petals too !

* * * * * * *

Time sped along, and, day by day,
Another year had passed away,
Another winter fled, and May
Returned, as poets say, a queen
All crowned with flowers and decked in green.

One morning Edna rose at dawn,
And walking out upon the lawn,
Upon her heart, vague, undefined,
A shadow fell, and dark behind
That shadowy cloud there seem to loom
Some mighty woe, and awful gloom.
The early sun was full and bright
And filled the world with warmth and light ;
The tiny clouds flecked o'er the sky,
And passing quickly, floated by ;

The sounds came up from o'er the hill
Of singing birds and rippling rill ;
And yet a pain she did not know
To Edna spoke of coming woe.
She walked through grasses bathed in dew,
To where a wood its shadows threw.
And pausing there a while to rest,
She watched a robin build its nest.
And as she tarried dreamingly,
Low sound of voices floated by,
And soon across the sparkling grass
She saw two forms draw near and pass,
Till close to where perplexed she stood,
They paused within the little wood.

As Edna turned the way they came,
She heard a low voice speak her name,
And, turning, she saw standing there
Earnest and Mable—false as fair :

He held her hand in lover's way,
And looked the words he dare not say,
And Edna saw the blush that woke
On Mabel's face when Earnest spoke ;
He drew her to his strong embrace,
And as she lifted up her face
He showered hot kisses on her cheek,
The while she smiled, but did not speak.

A deathly pallor shot across
Poor Edna's brow ; she knew her loss,
And saw, with bitter speechless pain,
Her blighted faith, and fond hopes slain.
She prest her hand upon her brow—
“My husband ! Heaven help me now !”
She stood there in the sun's warm flame,
And shook with chills she could not name,
While, deep within, the bitter smart
Was gnawing at her very heart.

At last she turned with smothered moan,
To grope her homeward way alone.
No light upon the hills was left,
And slow, as one of sight bereft,
She walked 'mid shadows dark as night
Without one ray of hope's fair light.

And none had seen her agony ;
And none had heard the bitter cry
Her heart sent up. How desolate—
How bleak it seemed ! O Love ! O Fate !

The hours crept on, till flaming high
And flushing o'er the burnished sky,
The west was all aglow with red—
The sorrow-laden day was dead.
The moon rose up in sea of blue,
And spread o'er all the world anew

Her pale gold gleams of ghostly light—
The shadowy veil of dusky Night.
And still within the quiet room
Poor Edna sat in the chill and gloom ;
Laid prostrate by the hand of Pain,
She struggled long to rise again,
Until with mighty will, at last,
She rose, and like one dazed, she passed
Out of the room in the dim light ;
And there, before her, gleaming white
A paper, neatly folded, lay,
Where it had been, unseen, all day.
A new foreboding seized her brain,
She tried to calm it, but in vain ;
She took the note with trembling hands,
And thus she read :—

“To foreign lands

We start to-day, Mabel and I,
And I but write to say good-bye ;

For, Edna, it is well we part,
Now there's no bond of mind or heart.
Don't deem me cruel, hard, unkind,
For in the end, be sure you'll find
'Tis best. Together, yet apart,
We long have lived, in mind and heart ;
And 'tis a farce, a mockery,
To dwell together as have we.
In this progressive, noble age,
The truth must war with falsehood wage ;
I'm not unjust, a canting knave,
Your share of all we have I leave,
And more. I told you long ago
All things must change, and it is so.
The smarting wound you now may feel
The soothing hand of Time will heal,
For could we read the sealed book,
Much that seems dark would brighter look.
So let our dream that could not last

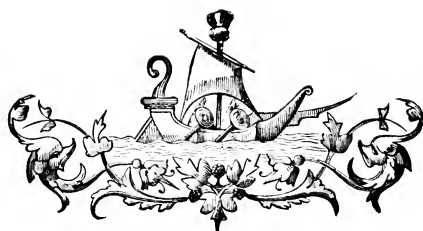
Fade into the forgotten past.”

* * * * * * *

Another year. Her landmark down,
Her heart's best idols overthrown,
And drifting in life's desert sand
Poor Edna reached out for the hand
Of Him who was on Calvary slain ;
And bringing all her grief and pain
Before Him, gathered what remained
Of joy's small fragments, and regained
By slow degrees her cheerfulness,
Living that others she might bless.
And like the bird which sings in death
The sweetest with its dying breath,
So her life's song seemed purified,
When earthly gods and hopes had died.



PART THIRD.



PART THIRD.

EARNEST and Mabel journeyed on
Through many a fabled land and town :—
To sunny France and Italy
They bend their way, o'er land and sea ;
They look aloft from Pisa's tower,
And seek new joys each passing hour ,
Anon they climb the Alpine side—
Adown its steeps together glide ;
On classic ground they stand amain,
And gaze on storied mount and plain ;
Then on a battle-field they stand,
And seem to see an army, grand
In burnished armor, marching on ;
Upon the plains of Marathon

They see the little band, alas,
Cut down within a mountain pass !
They change the scene. On castles rare
And lofty tow'rs, beyond compare—
Week after week, 'neath summer skies,
On art's best works they feast their eyes ;
Their ears are charmed with rapturous sound
Of choicest music floating 'round ;
They drink the liquid melody,
Are lulled, or charmed to ecstasy ;—
Insatiate still they sigh for more,
And now to Egypt's ancient shore
They wend their way ; entrancing hours
They pass 'mid pyramids and towers—
The relics of that ancient day
Of grandeur long since passed away ;
They watch the Nile's dark waters flow,
Anon o'er Syria's plains they go ;
On Jordan's banks they stand ; they see

The storied sea of Galilee,
Whose angry waves submissive heard
The calming tones of Jesus' word ;
They walk the streets of Bethlehem,
And thence to fair Jerusalem ;
They gaze upon Mount Calvary—
The garden of Gethsemane.

And here they stood while all around
Was strangely still ; there rose no sound
Till Mabel spoke :

“On yonder hill
I see that which my senses fill
With awe unspeakable ; but no,
I *seem* to see what long ago
O'erspread with a mysterious gloom
The scenes that now in beauty bloom.
Beyond I see Antonia's tower
Whence came the soldiers in that hour

Of deepest shame and agony ;
And there upreared the cross I see,
Round which the crowds with cruel eyes
Gaze on the awful sacrifice !

'Tis strange that Fancy's pen will shade
The picture when the sketch is made :
How often do we seem to see
Things that we've read of ; it may be
The mind creates things never seen,
And views them as if truth they'd been,
Just as the blind man will retain
The scenes he ne'er may view again ;
As when he hears the flowing rill
'Tis there before his mind's eyes still,
And mem'ry paints the pleasing sight
Of ripples sparkling in the light ;
And when he hears among the trees
The singing birds, or gentle breeze

Stirring the leaves, his mind will quick
Give the trees form, the scene depict.
So 'tis that now before me still
I see the cross on yonder hill.
Oh, Earnest, there's some magic spell
Around my heart ; so let me tell
The thoughts that haunt my boding brain ;
I strive to hush them, but again
There come from out the silence round
Reviling cries, and then the sound
Of one in bitter agony—
'My God, why hast forsaken me ?'

What means it, Earnest ? hearing, sight
Do seem immortal ; when the light
Paints nothing on the sightless eyes
Those eyes still see the summer skies ;
And when is dead the hearing ear,
Sweet sounds it oft times seems to hear ;

These things I ponder oft ;—to me
They're such a wondrous mystery.
'Tis like as if in morn's first blush
An artist take his magic brush,
And saunter forth to paint the dawn,
And finding thence his canvas gone
He paints the vacant, ambient air,
And lo ! the picture should be there."

But Earnest by no sign or word
Gave token that he knew or heard
What Mabel said ; but when he turned
A fresh-lit flame within him burned.
For, as through light we lead the blind
And they see not, so Mabel's mind
He'd guided on and guessed not
That she had ever any thought
Not shared by him. Now with surpris^a
He saw the scales fall from her eyes.

We speak of darkness being black,
But those who never saw must lack
Knowledge of colors, nor do care
The precious joys of sight to share ;
Is it not true that we desire
To reach what in our grasp's no higher
Aim ? This thought in Earnest woke
A new-found fear when Mabel spoke ;
He long had felt within his breast
Stirring at times a strange unrest—
As when the sun shines brightest, then
A shadow is the plainest seen,
So when joy smiled in sunniest mood,
A shadow in his pathway stood.

He noted that on Mabel's face
And on her form of wondrous grace
Admiring glances often fell ;
At first it pleased him passing well,

As if some diamond or rich gem
Upon his breast delighted them ;
But when he saw that it was true
That Mabel shared the pleasure, too,
His pulses beat with quick alarm,
As at some vague and hidden harm
Portending. Yet, to feel at ease,
He queried : Should she not be pleased ?
'Tis woman's nature thus to be
Delighted with idolatry.

And so it chanced to be, one day
He stood beside fair Mabel Clay
And thought he felt such rapturous bliss
Holding her tiny hand in his ;
" Nothing," he said, " shall part us, aye,
Let's swear to each other, Mabel Clay !
All other bonds we will forego,
For ah, I love you, love you so !"

“But, Earnest, all things change, you know,
And love, of course—you told me so ;
I know not yet how strong may prove
Your love for me ; we know that love
Is often but an empty name—
A cloak for falsehood and its shame,
Too often trampled in the dust
Of cant, hypocrisy and lust.
And so ’t may be, with growing years
The dream that now your heart endears
May fade from both our lives away :—
With forms well-marked with time’s decay
Remembrance of this love of ours
Will seem but scent of memoried flowers.”

And Earnest looked in Mabel’s face
Surprised ; in vain he strove to trace
Some hidden thought. ’Neath drooping lid
Again each sparkling eye is hid ;

Unconscious of all things around,
She stood with eyes cast on the ground.
So fixed on Mabel Earnest's gaze,
He noted not the sky ablaze
With lurid fire—the lightning's glare,
Nor heard the thunder rend the air;
Nor saw the storm-clouds in the sky
In threatening masses rushing by ;
But when in torrents fell the rain
They tried a shelter to regain,
And small the space they had passed o'er
When flashes sharper than before
In zigzags came athwart the sky,
And then arose a piercing cry
From Mabel's lips. And silent there
Poor Earnest lay, like a vanquished foe
Struck down by one great giant blow.

* * * * *

Time passed ; in darkness, day by day,

'Twixt hope and fear poor Earnest lay,
And moaning prayed through endless night
For just one hour of blessed sight,
Till came conviction crushing hope—
He must henceforth in darkness grope.
No more his sightless orbs shall see
The sunny skies of Italy ;
No more behold sweet Mabel's face—
Her subtle form of matchless grace.

His eyes now closed from outward sight
He turned within for hidden light ;
Reflection now asserts her sway,
He sits and dreams from day to day
Of vanished joys and scenes gone by—
Of trying to read in Mabel's eye
The secret thoughts that hidden lie ;
And lingered still the words she spoke
Which now new fears within him woke—

“But Earnest all things change, you know,
And love of course—you taught me so!”
How long would her affection prove?
How long would she a blind man love?

But hours and days and weeks pass by—
On swiftly moving wings they fly,
And Earnest learns with glad surprise
That he can see—with Mabel’s eyes.
He loved to sit at eve and hear
Her low sweet voice, so soft and clear,
To list her footsteps’ dainty tread,
To feel her hands upon his head—
Her kiss that thrilled his being through.
Was all of earthly bliss he knew.

“Mabel,” he said, “when on your brow
Come lines of care, and frosts and snow
Besprinkle o’er your locks of gold,

When this fair form is bent and old,
I'll see it not, but you will seem
All young and fair, and I will dream
That time on you no change has wrought—
Will that not be a happy thought?"

Then Mabel answered : "It is true
That time this change must bring to *you*,
And *I'm* not blind," then silent sat—
He silent too ; and long they wait
Each for the other one to speak.
She noted not the pallid cheek
Of Earnest, or she heeded not,
Nor cared she for the changes wrought
By apprehension, in his mind,
Lest love's frail link not long might bind
Fair Mabel to a poor blind man,
Unpledged by any sacred ban.

Thus lost in thought, he heard no sound
Of stealthy footsteps moving round,
Without, no sound of carriage wheels—
Deep is his anguish, for he feels
That sometime he may be alone,
And wake to find his loved one gone.

“Mabel, for your sake,” low he said—
“Rather for mine—would I were dead!”

No answer came ; was heard no sound ;
An awful silence brooded round :—

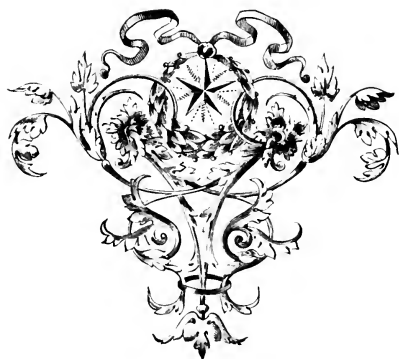
“Why are you silent, Mabel, dear ?
O, Mabel, answer ! are you here ?”

He gropes and grasps, and calls in vain ;
A horror seizes on his brain—
Yes, it was true ! his bird had flown,
And left the blind man all alone.

What thoughts now fill his weary mind,
Sitting deserted, helpless, blind ?
What pictures now his visions fill—
The sunny skies, the Alpine hill ?
Italian fruits, the laden vine ?
The Danube or the flowing Rhine ?
Statues and paintings, ruins old—
Does longing memory now unfold
Such treasures to his panting soul ?
Or does she calmer scenes unroll—
Point to refreshing shades, and where
Peace, like a river, floweth there—
To that dear spot, his home's sweet vale ?
And sees he there a sweet face, pale—
With eyes of tenderest, purest blue,
That look in his so frank and true ;
Hears he a voice say as of yore :
"True love is love forever more !"
Do jingling sounds of some old chain

Ring their discordant notes again, '
And joined together, link by link,
Draw back old scenes and make him think
That after all 'tis fain, may be,
That by the fruit to judge the tree ?

PART FOURTH.





Largo.

SCHUBERT.

Handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of four systems of staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking. The second system includes a *cres.* (crescendo) marking. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, key signatures, and various musical notes and rests.

PART FOURTH.

THE close of a December day,
The snow in ghastly whiteness lay
O'er darkling brae and sloping hill ;
In shrieking accents, sharp and shrill,
The winter winds went wailing by,
In notes of dolorous harmony.

And out upon the banks of snow
Shines forth the ruddy firelight's glow
From the hearth that warms the quiet life
Of Edna, the deserted wife.

Long years have gone since that sad day
When passed her dearest hopes away ;

And still she loves in the firelight's gleams
To picture the past in waking dreams.
Thus peace creeps in her breast, and stays,
As sunshine in a prison strays.

And musing in the twilight dim
She sings a well-remembered hymn
Of faith in Him whose saving power
Has been her hope in sorrow's hour ;
So plaintive is her voice, and sweet,
With liquid melody replete,
The angry winds that wail along
Seem softened by the tuneful song.

SONG.

“Oh, pity the sailor that saileth to-night
Out on the stormy sea ;
Without the guide of the bright moon's light,
Full many a wreck there'll be !

From stranded hulks that the winds assail,
Comes wafted o'er the wave
The dismal sound of a lost soul's wail—
'In pity come hither and save!'

Ah, pray for the sailor that saileth to-night
On life's tempestuous sea;
If his boat be not staunch and manned with might,
Full many a wreck there'll be!
Then pray for the sailor that saileth to-night
On life's tempestuous sea,
That he may be guided by heavenly light
To the haven where he would be!"

But hark! without, a piercing cry
Comes on the cold wind shrieking by,
And Edna, hast'ning to the door,
Hears faint above the tempest's roar
A piteous moan—"Help! I am blind!"
And heedless of the biting wind

He thus returned. "How oft shall I
Till seven times?" she questioned not,
But all her grievous wrongs forgot.

And slowly joy crept in once more,
And filled their hearts as once of yore.
So days passed by, and months and years,
Taking and bringing hopes and fears.

* * * * *

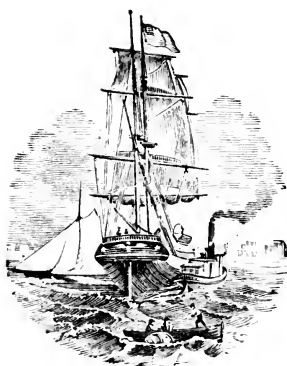
Again the summer came and went,
And Autumn into winter blent;
The night closed in; the day was late;
In dreamy mood blind Earnest sate
With Edna at the glowing fire,
And as the winds without blew higher
The flames upon the hearth grew bright:
"Pity the wretch that's out to-night,"
Said Edna, "while we're snug and warm
Some one may perish in the storm;

How fierce and wild the night winds moan ;
How like the agonizing groan
Of some poor outcast that may roam,
Without a shelter or a home."

So like the words she spoke of yore
That Earnest roused himself once more,
And listed to the chill wind's wail ;
When lo ! a sound his ears assail
That smites his soul with pain'd surprise ;
And lifting up his sightless eyes
He hoarsely whispered : " List ! nor speak—
I hear amid the wild storm's shriek
A human voice in concert groan,
Some wanderer in the storm alone !
A blind man's ears are quick, again—
I hear a bitter cry of pain."

Soon Edna saw a human form
Struggling against the battling storm ;

And then a woman, drabbled, torn,
With light of youth and beauty gone,
Sat shivering by the fire's warm glow,
A haggard child of want and woe.



PART FIFTH.



PART FIFTH.

IN telling a sad tale, rhymes sound
Like too gay music at a funeral ;
Words may move on in measured tread,
As we march slowly to the grave
Behind the corse of the loved dead.
So we will let the outcast tell
Just as she pleases, in homely words,
The story of her wrongs and wants.
The famishing ones do care not
For silver service—snowy cloth—
Bread 'tis they cry for, and they clutch
With eager hands, and eat with greed.

So Edna sat beside her guest
And stirred the fire to make more warmth,

And strove to have her put aside
The scanty cloak and faded hood.
“Not now,” she trembling said, “not now—
But let me tell my story through
And then I’ll gather myself up
And go out in the storm to die.”
Then Edna peering in her face
Sighed “and so young ! that shall not be,
For of the young there’s always hope.
The young tree blighted by the storm
May bloom again perchance and live.
There’s many a sheep that goes astray,
And greater joy there is in heaven,
O’er one repentant sinner saved
Than over ninety-nine just ones
That tempted never were to stray.”

“To live ! the outcast then replied—
“I do not wish to live ! for life

Is but a loathsome thing to me ;
My soul this body doth abhor,
And in its turn, this body hates—
(If bodies can)—this thinking soul !
I long to rest my quivering brain
In death ; deep in the grave
I might at least in peace be hid
From the dread scornful gaze of men.
And thus my body, like a slave,
Against the spirit doth rebel.
E'en now the tongue begins to threat
To stop its utterance ; the lungs
Refuse to take in air, and must
Be drugged.

But bear with me, I pray ;
I have drank so deep from sorrow's cup,
And ate so long the bread of shame,
That pictures of the brighter days
Come slowly, like the changing clouds,

And ere their happy hues I trace
They fade and leave me lost in doubt.

The joys of home were never mine ;
A mother's love I never knew ;
And when a child—scarce more than babe—
I stood beside my father's knee
And faced the busy frowning throng
That roughly jostled us aside
Beneath the stately city's walls,
Not heeding that my father was
A cripple, who had left afar
On Shiloh's bloody field his proof
Of bravery.

And so each day
I'd sing for what they chose to give
To beggars—we were nothing more.

One day while thus I stood, I heard

My father moan ; and looking up
I saw him drooping to the ground,
And soon lay stretched prone at my feet.
Who cared for such as we ? he died,
His poor head pillowed on my lap.
I was alone.

When my young brain
Stood on the track of thought again,
I took my stand once more, and sang
Alone with quivering voice ; and scarce
I'd wailed through one familiar strain
Before my voice was drowned in tears.
And as I wept there came along
Two women, and they looked at me.
They seemed like angels sent from heaven,
As bending down they stroked my hair
And told me they would take me home,
And I should all their comforts share ;
That they would deck my fair young form

With silks and laces.

And I went—

What wonder that a girl like me
Should follow them unquestioning?—
(Ah! how I shudder, looking down
Into that chasm where I fell!)—
An innate mentor bade me fly
From that foul roof of sin and shame;
So when the cage-door was ajar
Trembling I flew, and panting stood
And watched my sister birds that passed
In smooth, unsullied feathers, by.
They seemed to look at me askance,
And smoothed their shining plumage back,
As leprous were my very touch.
And thus their every action said:
'A *rara-avis*, let her die!'

What could a poor Pariah do?

Starve in the streets, a martyr like?—
Prepared are few for martyrdom—
Go back again of my accord
And take the vow of infamy?
I stood, one foot on virtue's soil,
And one on that of slippery vice,
Halting 'twixt two opinions, when
I saw a man's eyes fixed on me,
Pity and admiration blent.

I'd learned to read the face divine;
He, too, had learned, for well he knew
From whence I'd come; and when he said:
'Come home with me, forsaken one,'
I waited for no further words,
But turned and looked into his face
To test how much Lavater taught
A girl of scarcely seventeen.
I did not know how easy 'twas

For some to place such dazzling lights
Within the windows of the soul
That none can fix their steady gaze
Upon the inmate hidden there.

He looked sincere, and so I went
With faltering footsteps, and, half dazed,
Walked on beside him, while he told
About his wife, how kind and good
She was ; she'd learn to love me soon—
Until I felt my heart aglow ;
Like Bunyan's pilgrim, I could cry :
Life, life ! for me too—such a worm.

'Twas so I found her—good and kind ;
In sunshine and in joy I basked—
The worm a butterfly had turned,
Flitting all day from flower to flower ;
Books, too, I learned, and he—I mean

My new found friend—was good enough
To unveil their meaning, hidden deep.
He taught me how the hardened rock
Had softened into fertile earth ;
How years and ages had rolled on
Before the fertile fields appeared ;
And then he showed how empty were
The childish creeds and follies taught
By blinded Christianity.

The clay was in the potter's hands,
And I was molded at his will—
And next he taught how all things change ;
Opinions would, and should, be free—
No creeds should bind the immortal soul !
At this I paused and stood aghast,
When lo ! he placed before my gaze
Green fields and hills, and silvery streams,
And swelling seas and snow clad mounts,

And gorgeous palaces, and towers,
And glittering gems—alluring scenes ;
Till, fairly dazzled, I saw naught.
And then he led me at his will,
Until God's finger touchèd him,
And holding him fast prisoner, said,
' Thus far, no further shalt thou go,
Except another's hand shall lead !'

But I had learned all things were free,
The chains upon the culprit's feet—
Only by force are fastened there ;
And I, not like Andromeda,
Would not be fastened to the rock ;
So long I'd quaffed from pleasure's cup
That like the inebriate, I cried
For more to drink, else I must die !
Upon me still the curse remained,
Time had but added to its weight,

It rested on my face, my form ;
And as I in some mirror gazed
What I'd heard others say, I said—
'How beautiful ! how beautiful !'

But ere one year had circled round,
God's mighty hand fell on me, too ;
For three long months I felt its weight,
When lo ! the curse was all removed,
And they that loved the curse—not me—
Departed, and left me alone."

As Edna listened eagerly,
With bated breath, she scanned again
The stranger's way worn, haggard face.
"Mabel !" she cried, while Earnest sat
With head bent low. Then Mabel rose,
Threw back her hood and thread-bare shawl,
Standing erect, displayed to view
Her wasted form and meager face.

“Edna,” she said, “look well at me,
And tell if human passions lurk
Among the tombs of skeletons.
Think you within these bones there burn
The fires of hate, revenge, or love?
We’ve fought life’s battles, you and I,
But you’d a breastplate, helmet, too,
Aye, you’d God’s whole strong armor on,
And so you came out conqueror;
Alas! for my poor, naked soul,
Defenseless, target-like, ’twas torn
By all the fiery darts of hell!
One longing only has it now—
To rest; how can I rest, I cried,
With guilt oppressed; and then I came
Straightway to you, saying, perchance
If *she* forgives, my Father will.”

And all were still till Edna rose,

And taking Mabel's hand, she said :
" And you would wander out to die
While he who led your soul astray
Is safe from harm, nay, even loved !"

But Mabel bowed her head and wept ;
" The blessings you would fain bestow
Would turn to coals upon my head ;
Is it repentance brought us here ?
Think you, Edna, he or I
Had turned to virtue's quiet paths
Were not God's strong arm stretchèd out ?
I tell you nay ; except for that
We'd kept our course ; for not from choice
We turned, but stern necessity."

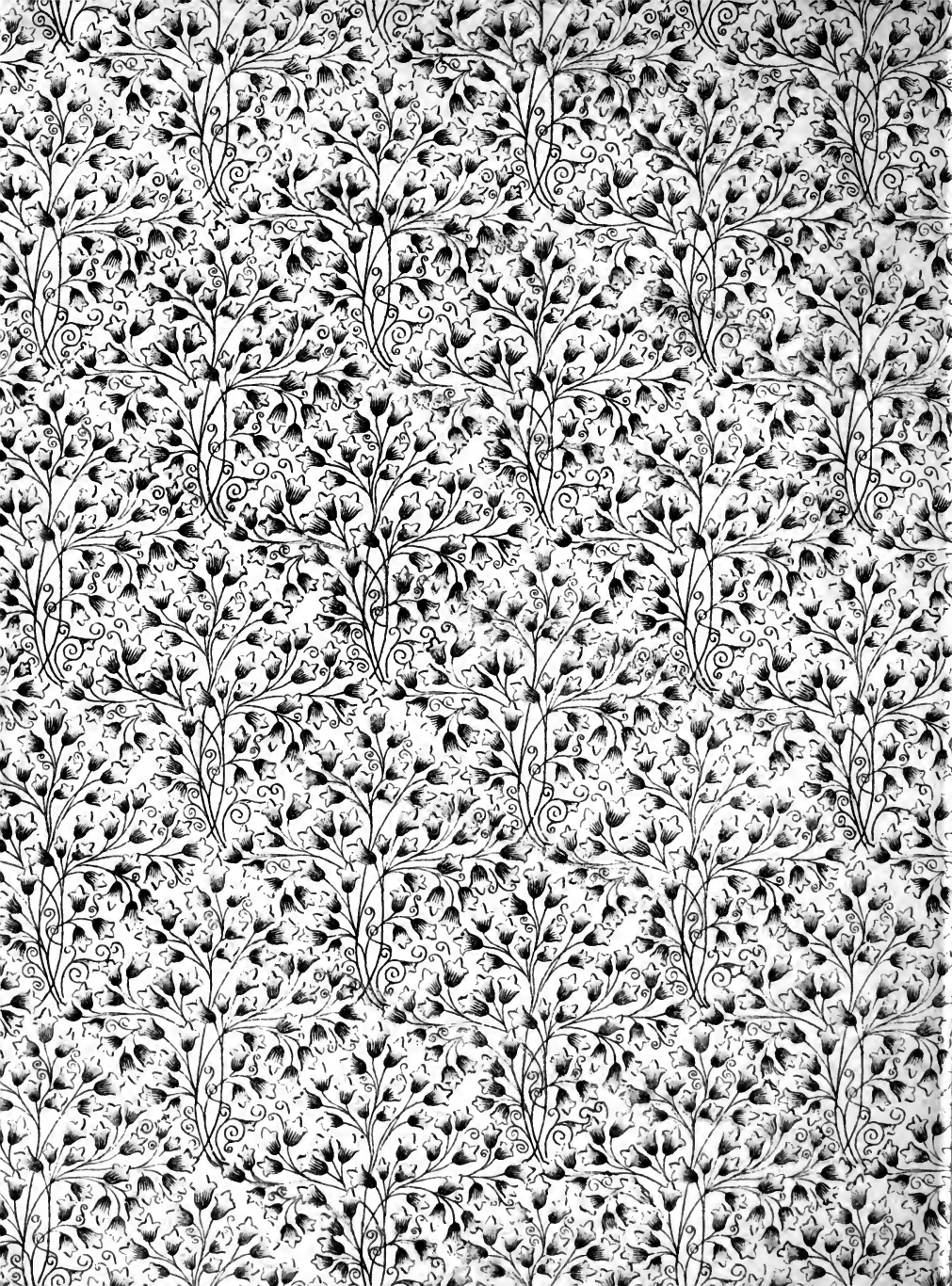
In silent anguish Earnest sat,
Nor gave he token that he knew
Who 'twas that spoke. And Edna bent

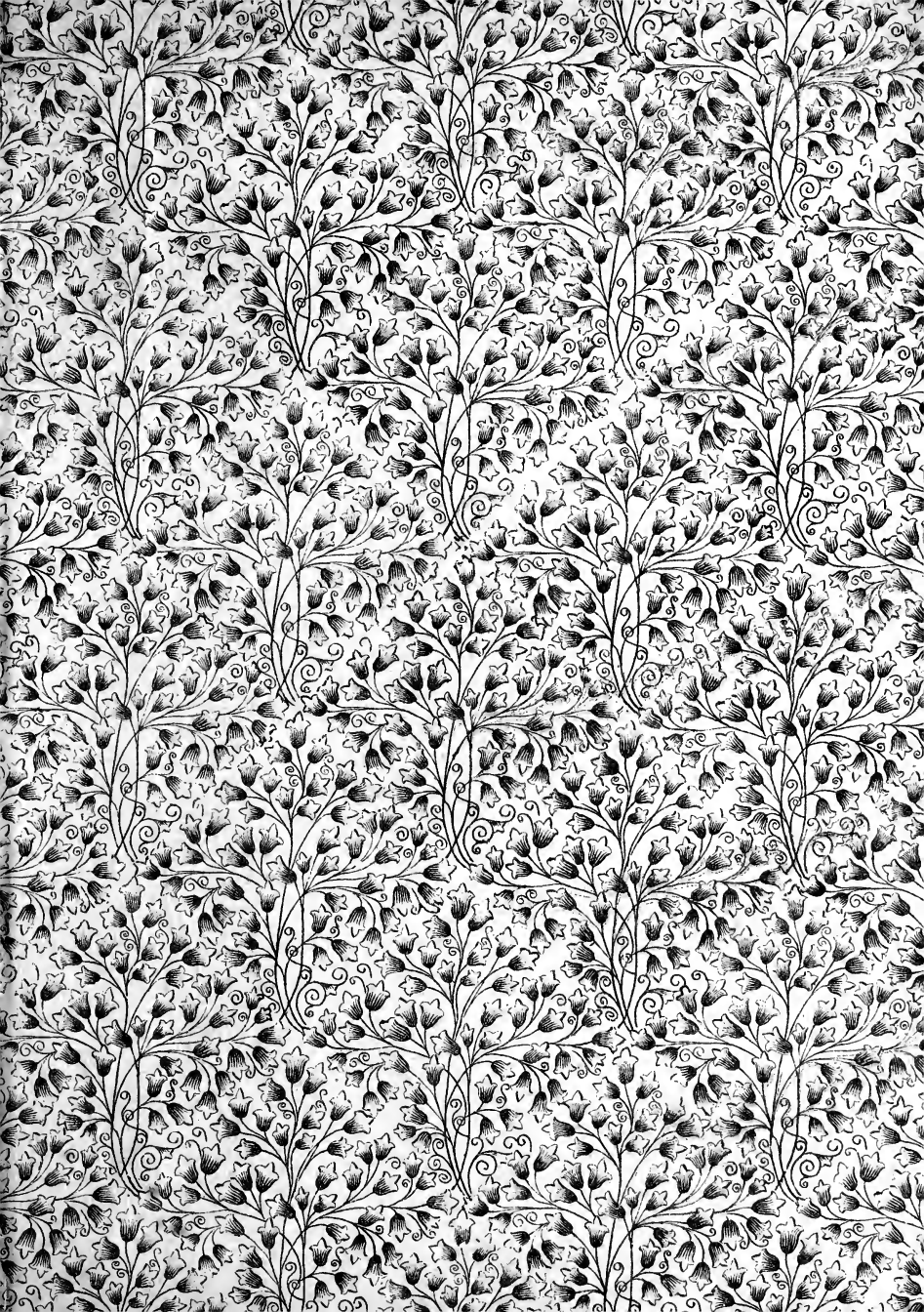
And kissed them both—the kiss of peace.
“When St. Paul journeyed on,” she said
“To persecute the saints, think you
He’d ever paused, or turned about,
Had not God’s hand been stretchéd out?
God teaches as he always taught,
By mercies, and by judgments, too;
Events that seem but common place
What time they happen, and what place,
Oft change them into miracles,
And ’tis His hand has led you here.”

THE END.









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